

tion to the Letters. She uses their writings to recreate their life. And those unlearned in Greek should refrain from 'On not knowing Greek.' They would have to begin at once.

THE BENEDICTINES. By Dom David Knowles. (Sheed & Ward, 2/6 net.)

A volume in the 'Many Mansions' series of concise and popular monographs on the principal Religious Orders. In the book before us Dom David Knowles sets forth in an able manner the essential spirit of Benedictinism and discusses its varied manifestations. It is an attractive account of the Benedictine ideal by one who has that ideal very much at heart, and we recommend very cordially Dom David's interesting pages of lucid exposition and candid self-criticism. J.M.

THE IDEA OF VALUE. By John Laird, M.A., Regius Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Aberdeen. (Cambridge: at the University Press; 18/-.)

It has been said that philosophy is but a toilsome and pedantic way of discovering what common sense always takes for granted. In so far as it is the function of philosophy to give rational and scientific justification to our intuitions the taunt is a truism. It is for this reason that a philosophy which fails to fulfil this function and which concludes in fantastic paradox will ever have more attraction as mental entertainment than the traditional philosophy of common-sense. But when the commonplace has disappeared in the litter heaped up by sophistication, the thinker who attempts to extricate and expose the obvious deserves our gratitude. And there is a certain pleasure in the re-discovery of even the most trite when it has been lost and forgotten.

'If the present volume,' Professor Laird concludes, 'clears a little rubbish away and does not add much more, it will have amply fulfilled its purpose.' Any effort to give some definite significance to the confused concept of value deserves all attention. A cursory reading of this difficult book might suggest that if Professor Laird has cleared away much rubbish, he himself has somewhat smothered the main issue with irrelevances. It is probable that a closer study would do much to modify this criticism; but despite the clarity of much of the detail and the crisp definiteness of the style, the trend of the argument is often hard to follow. But it is clear that Professor Laird has some very important things to say; and although, at the end of it all, we are only put on the road 'towards a conclusion,' it is

Blackfriars

comforting to be able to recognise that road as leading quite definitely away from contemporary relativisms and subjectivisms back to a 'timological theory' of value which resembles pretty closely the traditional and Thomist idea of the Good.

Theories of value, the author considers, are ultimately reducible to two: the 'elective theory' and the 'timological theory.' The elective theory 'rests on the simple foundation that whatever *matters* to a thing, or concerns it, is a value or a disvalue to that thing; and that whatever does not matter to it, is, for it, no value but wholly indifferent.' (p. 302). It thus conceives value as essentially relative, and identifies that which is good *from a certain point of view* with that which is good *simply* (p. 321). 'Elective values are relative to the elective agent, and timological values are absolute.' The timological theory 'has to do, in old-fashioned language, with what is good from God's point of view.'

The elective theory and the timological theory are contradictory. But the acceptance of a timological theory of absolute values does not involve a denial of relative values. On the contrary, the relative postulates an absolute. We remind ourselves that Goodness, as traditionally understood, is not a relation, but the basis or capacity for a relation. Things are not good because they matter to one another, they matter to one another because they are good, and they are good in so far as they have attained their ultimate perfection and completion.

But Professor Laird's book is, we think, chiefly of importance on account of its criticisms of the prevalent 'appreciative theory.' He rightly regards the appreciative theory as a 'special form of the elective': it is the elective theory with an exclusively psychological application. 'It asserts that what matters to anything is what matters psychologically or emotionally.' On this hypothesis, all values are conscious, for if value is not to be identified with appreciation, it is at least commensurate with it. Further, it equates all judgments of value with value-experience. Consciousness of our actual appetite becomes the only gauge of value, and all valuation becomes a function of experimental affective knowledge.

Against this disastrous view, which destroys the possibility of any rational ethic, Professor Laird brings forward both destructive and constructive criticism. Affective experience can only provide us with seemingly 'recessive' judgments, judgments, that is to say, in which value is attributed to an object which in reality belongs only to our affective state towards that object. But this is not to explain value, but virtually to deny it, al-

though 'it is possible that if we traced a recessive judgment to its recesses we should run upon a non-recessive judgment.' Nevertheless it is to be noted that on Thomistic principles the affective judgment, although conditioned and specified by the affective state, is strictly objective; for it is not merely the consciousness of an affective state in general, but of a particular affective state towards a particular object. It is knowledge of the object as actually valued—*ut amatum et contactum*. The affective state itself requires to be predetermined by cognition: the rectitude of our appreciations and the objectivity of our experience through these appreciations will be proportioned to the clarity of our concepts, which in their turn will be conditioned by the rectitude of abstract thought. Professor Laird insists on the fundamental importance of reason and 'rational insight' as the proper instrument of valuation, and here again we recognise a return to sane tradition. It is true that he is careful to dissociate his 'reason' from any 'fetish of the schools,' but we suspect that no Thomist who is aware of the rôle played by the intellectual *habitus* will be inclined to disagree with him.

V. W.

THE LIFE OF ALL LIVING. The Philosophy of Life. By Fulton J. Sheen, Ph.D. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 7/6).

Dr. Sheen's title reads queerly and the sub-title is misleading since he aims at 'an analogical description of Revealed Truths in terms of biology. In other words it (the book) might be called a Supernatural Biology—a treatise on Divine Life.' We have quoted from the author's preface and to quote again, 'This book is not a proof of the great truths of Christianity but a description and an analogy of these verities in terms of life. It is hard to see where the 'Philosophy of Life' comes in. Once more we read, 'In such moments, when hunger, either intellectual or physical, gnaws at one's very being, it is not essential to demonstrate that poisons must be avoided or that food must be taken; it is enough to present the pabulum.' Surely care must be taken, too, that the pabulum be attractive as well as nourishing. When he tells us (p. 67), 'Just as all the citizens of this country under the headship of our President constitute the American nation, so too the union of all baptised under Christ constitutes the Mystic Christ, or what St. Augustine called the *totus Christus* or the Church,' we confess to more than a slight distaste.

It is really difficult to believe that the Catholic Church in this country or elsewhere can benefit from these well-meaning but